



# THE FAMILY CONNECTION

NEWS FROM THE TEXAS JUVENILE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

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## Editor's Corner

It is my sincere wish that many of you were able to see your child in our facilities over the holidays. During the holiday season you can always count on extra days of visitation at each facility. This year, Christmas was on a Sunday, so added weekdays for visitation may not have not been available. The spirit of giving and goodwill was certainly seen among our facilities. Here are some photos on how TJJD gave back to the community.

On Tuesday, December 20th, the MART complex gave back to the community by ringing the Salvation Army Bell from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Mart staff were asked to bring their children in Santa hats and assist in ringing the bell for the Salvation Army. The Mart staff also donated items that were displayed on a Giving Tree in their facility's arrival area. All the items donated were given to the Compassion Ministries of Waco. The goal of Compassion Ministries is to provide a homelike atmosphere to families with children who are homeless or unable to maintain their current residence. The program provides a more secure and stable home environment that allows those in personal and financial crises to re-establish themselves. Using in-house staff and in conjunction with other agencies currently providing support services in the Waco area, Compassion Ministries makes available family counseling, job training/search, drug/alcohol abuse treatment, daycare, children's programs, transportation, literacy training, and health care.



G4S-The Oaks has partnered with Good Samaritan, Inc. in Texas, and on the first Friday of every month, youth will be doing various volunteer work. Recently, youth volunteered in sorting socks and counting puzzle pieces. seventy-two youth across the facility volunteered their time in the community program.



Tell us how we are doing at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FY2017FSCS>

# Frequently Asked Questions by Parents/Guardians

## 1. How soon can I visit my child?

All new youth coming to TJJD are first assigned to the Ron Jackson Orientation and Assessment Unit located in Brownwood, Texas. Your child may be in the Orientation and Assessment Unit between 30 - 40 days before receiving his/her long term assignment. During that time, parents or guardians may visit their child without going through the visitation approval process. Therefore, you may visit as soon as the first weekend after he/she arrives. Other immediate family members must first submit a visitor application to their child's case manager or the family liaison. The visitor approval process includes a criminal background check. The approval process takes between 7- 10 days. Contact the facility's Family Liaison for more information about the visitor application and approval process.

## 2. Where can I get a visitor application, and who do I send it to?

Visitor applications may be obtained from the TJJD website by going to the Programs and Facilities page and then clicking on the Family Supports Services link ([www.tjjd.texas.gov/programs/family\\_support\\_services.aspx](http://www.tjjd.texas.gov/programs/family_support_services.aspx)). After filling out the visitor application it should be mailed to the family liaison at your child's facility. The family liaisons' names and contact information is also found on the Family Supports Service's link. Visitor applications may also be obtained by contacting the family liaison and requesting an application.

Applications take 7-10 days to get processed and all applicants go through a criminal history background check. Background checks are repeated every 6 months and when a background check indicates criminal history involving a felony, the applicant goes through further consideration which takes longer than the original 7-10 days. Once you are approved for visitation at any of the TJJD facilities, your approval status also transfers if your child is transferred to another facility.

## 3. How is my child's placement decided?

Many things are considered in deciding which facility your child will be assigned to for the long term placement. When your child is at the Orientation and Assessment Unit in Brownwood,

he/she receives many evaluations to determine what his /her needs are. Our facilities have a variety of treatment programs as well as individualized educational programming. TJJD's goal is to get your youth ready to return home and to his/her community with skills that will help him/her be successful and independent. When a youth leaves the orientation and assessment unit, a committee with representation from education, treatment, psychology and case management reviews the youth's assessment results and interviews the youth before making his/her long term assignment. Placing the youth closest to his home is considered but so are the bed space availability and the treatment programs offered at each facility.

## 4. Is financial assistance available to help families who can't afford the transportation expenses to visit their child?

Each facility has a Volunteer Council that helps raise money for family assistance. The funds raised help to provide refreshments at Family Day, to assist families with transportation for visitation with their child, and may also be used for other youth related expenses. Each council has their own set of conditions that they consider when deciding if a family is eligible for assistance. You may contact the family liaison at your child's facility if you are in need of assistance with travel expenses in order to visit your child.

## 5. How can my child get transferred to another facility?

An administrative transfer for your child may be considered if there is a compelling reason to have him/her moved closer to home. However, his/her treatment needs have priority when determining placement. The request to have your child transferred closer to home has to be recommended for approval by the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT), the Social Services Committee, and the sending and receiving Superintendents. To initiate a transfer request for your child, you would need to contact his/her case manager so he/she can make arrangements for you or someone on your behalf to present your compelling reason to the MDT.

For a complete listing of the most frequently asked questions, visit [www.tjjd.texas.gov/programs/family\\_support\\_services.aspx](http://www.tjjd.texas.gov/programs/family_support_services.aspx).

# Youth Enjoy PBIS Fun Day



Every six weeks, all TJJD education departments participate in a Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) incentive program, which addresses the youth's individual ability to reach a set of identified expectations and behavior goals. This helps facilitate and shape behavior while building and reinforcing coping skills through targeted skill development. Overall, this offers the students directed practice, staff opportunity for modeling of pro-social skills, and positive reinforcement of targeted progress. The goal is to help youth reduce negative behavior while

developing corresponding positive behaviors to build long-term, internalized changes in behavior. Each facility has its own way of celebrating and rewarding youth who participate in PBIS Incentive Day. Incentive Day celebrations range from staff cooking a home cooked meal for the youth, allowing the youth to watch a special movie, or organizing special field events for some outdoor fun. Ask your child when was the last time he/she participated in a PBIS Incentive day at his/her facility.



# Parents' Conference on Helping Your Child Succeed

The Houston Area Resource Council for Texas Youth, composed of volunteers who donate their time and talent to positively affect the lives of TJJD youth, hosted a one-day regional conference on January 14, 2017. The conference was held in Houston and provided training and resources to paroled youth, their families and mentors. Workshop topics were related to healthy development, education, employment, mental health, and parenting. The conference had free admission and provided 14 sessions for attendees to select from. The noon luncheon's speaker was Victor Gonzalez, the Director of Anti-Gang Services for the Mayor's office in Houston. Mr. Gonzalez has developed gang



awareness training materials to educate law enforcement, criminal justice, school personnel and parents on how to deal with gang activity. Family members had the opportunity to hear success stories of youth that were successful in leaving gang activity behind.

# When Kids Refuse Shots, Parents Can Help!!

Vaccines are one of the greatest health gains of the twentieth century. Vaccines (shots needed for school) help the body to prevent or fight infection. If your child did not get all of his/her shots, it is not too late! Getting every dose of each vaccine gives your child the best chance of not getting certain infections or fighting them off before they become serious. At TJJD, we offer all of the shots to do this. As you may know, not all children want the shots and refuse to take them. When this happens, we need your help!

In talking with your child, here are some suggestions:

1. Be honest, warm and firm with your child and explain that the shot may sting for a minute but will not hurt for long;
2. Remind your child that taking the shot(s) can keep them from getting certain serious infections; and
3. Do not threaten your child as a way to convince him/her to take the shot(s).

Receiving vaccines not only helps your child but also helps other people to not catch certain infections from your child.



# Bench Marking at Ron Jackson

When Principal Sumner first arrived at the Ron Jackson Complex, she noticed that the school had a beautiful courtyard but, through the years, it had been neglected and was in much need of a make-over. She asked a few teachers, JCOs, and students if they could assist in making the courtyard a place of beauty where they could gather to relax and enjoy their surroundings. This is when bench marking took a new meaning at Ron Jackson's school campus. Students were given the opportunity to display their artistic and creative talent. Some students chose to paint inspirational messages on the benches, messages of hope such as "My Faith and Love will never be confined to prison walls." Other benches were painted with stars and stripes to symbolize freedom. The Horticulture class planted flowers and shrubs; the Mill and Cabinet class made a couple of picnic tables and other students made birdhouses. Ms. Sumner stated, "My hope for this project had been that our students could help create something beautiful that they could take pride and ownership of, and maybe make some connection to life. This is way more than I hoped for and is an excellent example of collaboration, and stewardship to say the least."



## Questions or Comments?

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# Youth Get Electronic Tablets at Two TJJD Facilities

Tablets have now been issued to youth at the Gainesville and Giddings facilities. The youth qualified by reaching behavior and educational goals in academic grades, number of responsibility center referrals, and security admittances. Points were accumulated and calculated in order to implement a dorm "group incentive." In Gainesville and Giddings, there were three/four dorms that qualified to receive and use the tablets for 30 days. Youth will have to support each other in order to qualify as the top dorms to receive the tablets each month. Students will have to complete and submit educational enrichment activities every day so that achievement points will accumulate throughout the month. If the youth is referred to security and/or has been issued a Loss Of Privileges (LOP), youth will not be able to use a tablet until they are off the LOP list.



The youth have access to thousands of electronic books through the use of these tablets. They can also access educational videos, educational applications to develop their math skills, and some entertainment applications. TJJD will be monitoring behavior goals and academic improvement over the next 3 months and will make adjustments where necessary. The students were very excited and engaged with the tablets and have accessed over 400 books so far from the online library!

Tell us how we are doing at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FY2017FSCS>